

Alerting and Communicating Devices for Deaf and Hard of Hearing People – What's Available Now

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simply lifts the telephone handset, inserts a coin, and dials the number just like any pay telephone call. The pay TTY listens to the telephone line for the sound of another TTY. When the person answering begins to type, the drawer containing the TTY slides out.

When the conversation ends, the pay TTY automatically closes the drawer, erases the memory and returns the telephone to normal operation. Once closed, the drawer cannot be open unless another TTY call is made.

Amplification Devices for Telephone Use

The telephone handset may be specially wired with an amplification device. Such volume control handsets may provide up to 30 percent additional power for the listener who has a hearing loss. They may be used with or without an individual's hearing aid.

Portable Amplifiers are small devices that can be carried in a purse or briefcase and slipped over the receiver of a regular telephone handset to provide increased amplification. They can be especially useful for travelers who are unable to find a pay phone with the amplifier handset, but who cannot manage telephone calls without such amplification. Portable amplifiers do not work with all phones. They are not compatible with princess, Trimline, or Slimline models, for example, since these phones do not emit sufficient magnetic leakage. Sometimes telephone adapters resolve this incompatibility.

Telephone adapters work with the hearing aid's telephone pickup feature, which is called the telecoil, telephone switch, or T-switch. A portable device slipped over the receiver, the telephone adapter does not amplify sound; it simply generates a magnetic field on which the hearing aid T-switch depends for proper operation. This adapter is necessary for the hearing aid wearer who uses Princess, Trimline, or Slimline phone or non-AT&T telephones. Many newer phones do not work with either the T-switch or the portable amplifier. Telephone adapters themselves vary in the amount of magnetic leakage they emit. Thus, it's mandatory to find out before buying whether a particular phone is compatible with a hearing aid, or a portable amplifier.

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TeleCaption Adapters

There are a few features available for captioning. The most recent development is the Television Decoder Circuitry Act. This law mandated that all television sets with screens 13 inches or larger that are manufactured for sale in the United States after July 1, 1993, must contain a built-in captioning decoding capability.

The other features available are decoders, such as the TeleCaption II Adapter, that are attached to television sets to enable viewers to read captions on their television screen. The signal is carried invisibly; only when the decoder is in operation can captions be seen. More than 400 hours of television viewing are captioned each week, including all of ABC's prime time and most network movies. Cable television distributors are also arranging to caption some of their programs and movies. The National Captioning Institute also has captioned more than 700 video titles for use on videocassette recorders (VCR). Therefore, persons with hearing loss can have increased access to the airwaves, making more attractive the consumer investment of about \$200 in such devices.

